

Dorm Talks Spring 1996

**Familiar Strangers:
Orthodox Jews Encountering
Non-Orthodox Jews and Non-Jews**

Speaker:
Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm

Should we establish meaningful relationships
with them?
What if they are part of our families?



Moderator: Rabbi Yosef Blau
Coordinator: Rabbi Joshua Cheifetz

Monday, April 22
Morg Lounge
8:00pm

Sponsored by The Residence Council
and by:
YCSC, SOY, IBCSC, BMPSC, JSSSC, SSSBSC,
The Commentator, and Hamevaser

BE THERE!

Familiar Strangers: **Orthodox Jews Encountering** **Non-Orthodox Jews and Non-Jews**

(The following is a dramatization)

[Circa 1930. A European Jew who has come to America:]

"A *goy* is a *goy*, my father used to say in the old country; meaning, we don't trust them and the less we have to do with them the better. And who could blame him for saying so, after all that has happened in Europe? Even for a long time after I came to this land of golden opportunity, I stayed with the rest of the *landsmen* on the lower east side of Manhattan -- not that I had a choice in the matter, I was so poor. But recently, after I landed this new job and moved uptown, I've come into contact with a lot of *goyim* and I have to tell you -- they're not all such bad people after all. Just yesterday one of them invited me to a party he is making. Sure, they have their crooks and bigots, and there is an occasional *sonei yisrael* mixed in. But mostly they are *schlepping* through this world the same way we are. Some of them would make very good Jews! Now, if I could only get into their country club..."

What should we, today, view as our role in the non-Jewish world? What are our responsibilities to the general society? How can we reconcile relationships with non-Jews based on the principles of *eivah* and *darchei shalom* with the transcendent perspective that all people are created *bitzelem elokim*? How should we interact with them socially? Should we establish meaningful personal relationships with non-Jews? Does it matter whether we live in an anti-Semitic society or not? Should we teach the *sheva mitzvos* to non-Jews?

[1996. The European Jew's grandson:]

"My grandfather never did get into the *goyish* country club, but my uncle did. Though he had a *talmud torah* education, he didn't think it was worth very much in this country, and he sent his children, my cousins, to public school. Much of our extended family is not *frum*. Some go to a temple, others don't bother even with that. Soon we are going to have our first real intermarriage, between my cousin and a girl he met in college. We received an invitation but of course we are not going to go.

"I find it difficult to relate to non-*frum* Jews in general. Kiruv I can deal with, but many of these pseudo-Jews, particularly those in the family, don't want to change, and are just not targets for my kiruv -- so are they just plain old *apikursim*?"

What should the Orthodox Jew view as his role in the non-*frum* world? Is Kiruv the only way we can relate to them? Should we distinguish between family and friends? Should we differentiate between Jews who are "secular" and Jews who belong to a different denomination of Judaism? Can we distinguish between Conservative and Reform Jewry? Are they to be viewed as *apikursim*, with all the implied stringencies prescribed by the *halachah*? Should we cooperate with them, and, if so, in what way?